Masthead Logo

The Palimpsest

Volume 4 | Number 5

Article 1

5-1-1923

The Palimpsest, vol.4 no.5, May 1923

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest

Part of the United States History Commons

This work has been identified with a Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0.

Recommended Citation

"The Palimpsest, vol.4 no.5, May 1923." *The Palimpsest* 4 (1923).
Available at: https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol4/iss5/1

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the State Historical Society of Iowa at Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Palimpsest by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

The Palimpsest

MAY 1923

CONTENTS

The First Iowa Field Day 137
BRUCE E. MAHAN

The Capital on Wheels 151
J. A. SWISHER

Comment 170
THE EDITOR

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER JULY 28 1920 AT THE POST OFFICE AT IOWA CITY IOWA
UNDER THE ACT OF AUGUST 24 1912

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH
Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

PRICE—10c per copy: $1 per year: free to members of Society
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society Iowa City Iowa

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

VOL. IV ISSUED IN MAY 1923 NO. 5

COPYRIGHT 1923 BY THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

The First Iowa Field Day

At this time of the year college athletes in Iowa are sprinting, hurdling, jumping, pole vaulting, throwing the discus, hurling the javelin, and putting the shot, but thirty-three years ago track and field meets were practically unknown. John V. Crum, who first taught the East that natives of Iowa were as fleet-footed as any in the tidewater region, did not enter the University until the autumn of 1890. To be sure, track athletics had been introduced in some Iowa colleges by professors from eastern institutions, but not until late in the eighties was there any general interest in racing, jumping, and weight throwing. The first Iowa "field day" occurred in June, 1890 — the direct forerunner of the present Annual Track and Field Meet of the Iowa Collegiate Athletic Association.

The beginning of track and field athletics at the State University of Iowa was repeated, doubtless,

with different characters and different settings at other Hawkeye colleges. Some of the circumstances connected with the first field meet at the University, however, were unique and still cause a chuckle when recalled by those who witnessed the event. In the autumn of 1889 William P. Slattery and his cousin, Jeremiah Slattery, Irish lads from Dublin and nephews of Archbishop John Hennessy of Dubuque, entered the College of Medicine at Iowa City. They had been students for two years at Blackrock College, Dublin, where they had participated in track and field sports and had acquired considerable skill in several events. It was not long before they became popular at the University and awakened much interest and enthusiasm in athletics as they recounted their experiences at Blackrock and told of the "contists for pints" in which they had engaged.

During the winter of 1889-1890 the desire for a State athletic association which would bring together all of the best athletes in Iowa colleges at a State meet in the spring began to assume definite form. The Slatterys were eloquent in their support of the project. Accordingly, in February, 1890, enthusiastic students of the University elected Robert Bonson, F. G. Pierce, and T. P. Findley to represent them in a meeting at Mt. Pleasant where the details of the proposed association were to be agreed upon by representatives of the various Iowa colleges. Fourteen schools were represented and the organization was perfected. A name, the Inter-Collegiate

Athletic Association (I. C. A. A.), was chosen, a constitution was adopted, and Grinnell was selected as the place to hold the first State field meet sometime during the following June. B. L. Osgood of Iowa Wesleyan was elected president; F. G. Pierce of the State University, vice-president; and C. W. Gorham of Cornell, secretary and treasurer; while the executive committee was composed of A. C. Savage of Iowa College (Grinnell), T. P. Findley of the University, and C. W. Gorham of Cornell. It became the duty of this committee to arrange the program, to buy medals for the winners, to fix the exact date for the meet, and to levy a tax on the members of the association to pay necessary expenses.

News of the organization of the State athletic association awakened new enthusiasm at the University of Iowa. As soon as the weather permitted, members of the local athletic association began intensive training to compete with the athletes of the other colleges of the State. The two Slatterys explained to their associates how to start in the sprints, how to put the shot, how to pole vault, and how to high jump in the approved fashion of the day. One member of the squad, now a prominent lawyer, said, "The Slatterys told us what to do and how to do it. They showed us the first pair of running shoes we ever saw, and back of the Old Capitol they led us in our workouts."

To arouse still more interest in athletics, a mass meeting was held in the chapel room one afternoon

in April at which President Charles A. Schaeffer presided. He called upon several professors to speak who, according to a local reporter, showed an unusual knowledge of athletics in general and offered many valuable pointers to the members of the association. Plans developed for a local field day in May — the first event of its kind at the State University of Iowa. This contest, it was thought, would serve a two-fold purpose: it would stimulate greater interest in athletics at Iowa City, and it would offer an opportunity to select a team to represent the University at the State meet in June.

Saturday, May 10, 1890, was selected as the date for the local meet. Approximately twenty-five men began daily practice, some of them at Englert's Ball Park near the present location of Iowa Field, others at the fair-grounds east of the city, and a few back of the Old Capitol on the campus. The college newspaper, *The Vidette-Reporter,* was moved to remark: "With such an interest we cannot fail to do a grand work, in which we have the hearty endorsement of the Faculty and Board of Regents." The sporting editor announced that athletes "must now refrain from eating ice cream. Too bad, ladies." Nor did he hesitate to assume the rôle of trainer and to publish the following advice: "To The Athlete: — Eat rare meat, eggs and graham bread. Little tea, no coffee, no milk, no hot bread, rice or pastry. Fruit is not hurtful. Drink no water between meals; use lemon juice to quench thirst."

Preparations to make the first field day at S. U. I. a gala event continued. Business men of Iowa City donated money to purchase silver medals for the winner of first place in each event, and a local clothing store offered a fine silk umbrella as a special prize for the field champion. An all-day program was planned, with tennis matches beginning at nine o'clock in the forenoon, while in the afternoon there were to be twenty-two field and track events. The meet was to be held at Englert's Ball Park, a triangular field enclosed by high board fences on two sides and bounded by the Iowa River on the third. Twenty-five cents admitted the spectator to the entire program, while an admission price of thirty cents carried with it the privilege of sitting in the little grand stand. Miss Elizabeth Schaeffer, the daughter of the President of the University, a handsome young lady who was extremely popular with the student body, was selected to award the medals and to distribute the prizes at the close of the meet.

A cold rain the night before the gala day caused much anxious observation of weather conditions, but Saturday morning, May 10th, dawned clear and cool, and the local reporter declared that the hearts of the athletes "were made exceeding glad."

The tennis contests of the forenoon drew only a fair-sized crowd, but in the afternoon the little grand stand was filled and a large number of students and townspeople lined the side of the park. Loud cheers greeted the athletes as they marched onto the field.

All of the contestants except the two Slatterys began to remove their collars and ties and to roll up their sleeves and trousers, but each of the Irish lads threw aside the blanket in which he was wrapped and stood forth arrayed in a regulation track suit. The ladies present gasped in shocked surprise.

A four-page program had been placed in the hands of the spectators. The front page proclaimed the "First Annual Field Day of the State University of Iowa Athletic Association" while below was printed a list of the officers of the association, the names of the field day committee, field officers, judges, starter, time keepers, measurers, and scorers. On the two inside pages were listed the twenty-two events and the names of the entrants in each. A space was provided where the spectator might write the name of the winner of first and second place and the record made in each event. The following information also appeared at the bottom of the third page: "The winner in each single event gets 2 points, the 2d man a point. The man scoring the greatest number of points will be declared field champion."

Lieutenant G. W. Read, head of the military department and during the World War a major general commanding the Second Army Corps in France, was master of ceremonies. The first event was a race between the classes of 1890, 1891, 1892, and 1893. Judges and starters took their stations and the meet began. Amid loud applause from the seniors the representative of the class of 1890

breasted the tape, followed by the runner for the class of 1893. The time was 12½ seconds.

Enthusiasm reigned. Throughout the afternoon the contestants were heartily cheered, and time after time the field echoed with the yell: "Hi! Hi! Hi! S. U. I.! Giddy, giddy, uni, S. U. I.!" The two Slatterys entered nearly every event and each succeeded in winning a large number of points. Jerry won the football kick by booting the pigskin a distance of 167 feet, he cleared the bar in the pole vault at the height of 7 feet and 7 inches which was high enough to win, took first place in the running broad jump with a leap of 19 feet and 3¾ inches, and won the hop, step, and jump with a record of 38 feet and 8 inches. Moreover, he placed second in the fifty yard dash, the one hundred yard dash, the two hundred and twenty yard "run", the standing high jump, and the hammer throw. Meanwhile, his cousin William won the four hundred and forty yard race in 68 seconds, an event which the reporter described as "the prettiest and closest race of the afternoon and elicited prolonged applause and toots." He also made a running high jump of 61 inches and ran the one hundred and twenty yard hurdle race in 22⅕ seconds — winning both events. Second place in the running broad jump gave him a total of seven points while his cousin, Jerry, with a total of thirteen points was the undisputed champion of the day.

Robert Bonson threw the baseball 284 feet and 6

inches. T. P. Findley won first place in the fifty yard dash, the one hundred yard dash, and the two hundred and twenty yard run. F. A. Hastings made a standing broad jump of 11 feet and 3¼ inches and a standing high jump of 51 inches. G. H. Clark put the sixteen pound shot 35 feet and 9 inches, and J. H. Stotts threw the hammer 102 feet. Lack of time made it necessary to omit the three-legged race, the flag race, and the tug of war, but the boxing exhibition between E. R. Lewis and James Mara afforded much amusement and received loud applause. Lewis won the decision.

Late in the afternoon the winners of first and second places lined up to pass before Miss Schaeffer to receive their medals. Jerry Slattery, the field champion, headed the procession, and an eye-witness testified that, as the young Irishman in his track suit stepped before the young lady to receive the silk umbrella and the medals he had won, the peaches and cream complexion of the donor changed to flaming scarlet.

Although no wonderful records were made that afternoon, the marks established were none the less commendable in view of the fact that the young fellows who participated were for the most part untrained in track work. Probably the creation of a genuine interest in this form of athletics was the most noteworthy result of the first field day at the State University of Iowa.

During the following weeks attention was focused

upon the State meet. The *News Letter* of Grinnell, which had been the official mouthpiece of the I. C. A. A., urged the attendance of large delegations from other colleges, and the promise that ice cream and strawberries would be served to all visitors was regarded as an additional inducement. Students at the University petitioned the faculty for a holiday and the request was granted. Strenuous workouts daily helped to develop the Iowa squad into a well balanced team. The Slatterys argued long and ardently on the propriety of the entire team wearing track suits at the meet, and finally won their point.

On the morning of June 6, 1890, the Iowa team of nearly twenty members, accompanied by a beribboned delegation of one hundred and seventy-five rooters, boarded the train bound for Grinnell to witness the First Annual Field Day of the Inter-Collegiate Athletic Association. The University crowd was the largest delegation from anywhere outside of Grinnell, and the *News Letter* acknowledged that it "had more lung power than all the other colleges put together."

An all-day program had been arranged, the tennis matches beginning at ten o'clock in the morning on the campus, the field and track events starting at two in the afternoon at the fair-grounds, and in the evening there was to be boxing, saber swinging, and fencing at the opera house. For officials the executive committee had selected C. W. Gorham of Cornell, chief marshal of the day; A. C. Savage of

Grinnell, day superintendent; T. P. Findley of the University, evening superintendent; Professor A. K. Jones of Cedar Rapids, referee; Lieutenant G. W. Read of the University, caller; Ed. Svoboda of Cedar Rapids, starter; and Robert Bonson of the University, E. A. Marsh of Grinnell, and C. A. Torrey of Cornell, timers.

Cornell won the tennis doubles and Grinnell the singles for men, but Miss Nellie Cox captured the tennis singles for women and thereby won a first for S. U. I.

Early in the afternoon a large crowd invaded the fair-grounds before the committee had provided for the collection of admission. As one reporter put it, the Association lost several dollars through this "soupy" oversight.

Probably the most hotly contested race of the afternoon was the half mile run. C. P. Chase of Iowa led almost the entire distance only to see J. McIlrath of Grinnell win by a spectacular spurt at the finish. In the pole vault J. F. Reed of Grinnell and Jerry Slattery of Iowa were tied at 8 feet and 11 inches. Reed then cleared the bar at 8 feet and 11½ inches but Slattery in attempting 9 feet fell and broke his hand. In the hurdle race W. P. Slattery breasted the tape "in the remarkable time of 18⅘ seconds", but J. F. Reed of Grinnell was declared victor because "Slattery had touched a hurdle." T. P. Findley of Iowa won the fifty yard dash, the seventy-five yard dash, and the one hundred yard

dash in thrilling fashion, and carried off the gold medal offered by the *News Letter* to the individual champion.

The three-legged race, run for Iowa by T. P. Findley and W. P. Slattery and for Grinnell by W. J. Barrette and W. R. Davis, was close, but owing to faults on both sides the judges ordered it to be run again. This Barrette and Davis refused to do and the race was forfeited to Iowa. On the other hand the Iowa tug of war team failed to materialize and this event was forfeited to Grinnell. At the close of the afternoon Iowa led Grinnell, the closest competitor, by a few points.

Summary of Events

Baseball throw — W. Zmunt (Ames), first; R. Bonson (Iowa), second. Distance, 362 feet, 9 inches.

Fifty yard dash — T. P. Findley (Iowa), first; C. C. Langley (Cornell), second. Time, 5⅗ seconds.

Football place kick — J. Slattery (Iowa), first. Distance, 187 feet, 2 inches. No second place.

Running broad jump — W. P. Slattery (Iowa), first; C. E. Locke (Cornell), second. Distance, 20 feet, 10½ inches.

Sixteen pound shot put — G. H. Clark (Iowa), first; S. R. Ure (Grinnell), second. Distance, 33 feet, 5¼ inches.

One hundred yard dash — T. P. Findley (Iowa), first; C. W. McEldery (Iowa Wesleyan), second. Time, 10⅕ seconds.

Hitch and kick — E. Woodbury (Grinnell), first; C. Cathcart (Cornell), second. Height, 8 feet, 2 inches.

Running high jump — J. Slattery (Iowa), first. Height, 5 feet, 3 inches. No second place.

One hundred and twenty yard hurdle (10 flights) — J. F. Reed (Grinnell), first; C. C. Langley (Cornell), second. No time recorded.

Hammer throw — W. D. Bailey (Grinnell), first; J. H. Stotts (Iowa), second. Distance, 76 feet, 5½ inches.

Seventy-five yard dash — T. P. Findley (Iowa), first; C. Boardman (Cornell), second. Time, 7⅗ seconds.

Pole vault — J. F. Reed (Grinnell), first; J. Slattery (Iowa), second. Height, 8 feet, 11½ inches.

Standing broad jump — G. P. Ruggles (Upper Iowa), first; F. A. Hastings (Iowa), second. Distance, 12 feet, 2½ inches.

Two hundred and twenty yard run — C. W. McEldery (Iowa Wesleyan), first; A. M. Cowden (Grinnell), second. Time, 23¼ seconds.

Half mile run — J. McIlrath (Grinnell), first; C. P. Chase (Iowa), second. Time, 2 minutes, 16⅖ seconds.

Tug of war — Awarded to Grinnell.

Three-legged race — Awarded to Iowa.

The evening program at the opera house was well patronized, but a poor stage placed the contestants

at a disadvantage. The Cornell heavyweight decided not to box and so E. R. Lewis and James Mara, both of Iowa, sparred three rounds, the former winning the medal. F. G. Pierce of Iowa and Cobb of Cornell competed in a middleweight boxing match which Cobb won on points, twenty-four to twenty-one. Arthur Gorrell of Iowa favored the audience with an exhibition of saber swinging, while Julius Lischer of Iowa and C. D. Premier of Cornell engaged in an exhibition of fencing which was won by Lischer. The successes of the evening, added to those of the forenoon and afternoon, made the State University of Iowa clearly the winner of the first I. C. A. A. Field Day. The rooters from Iowa City were delirious with happiness.

After the evening program at the opera house the visiting delegations were entertained at a reception tendered by the Grinnell students in the chapel. An orchestra furnished music, a male quartette sang several songs, and after the refreshments of strawberries and ice cream had banished any hard feelings that may have lingered from the stiff competition of the day, the remainder of the time was spent in convivial good-fellowship.

Nearly thirty-three years have elapsed since the first State meet of the Inter-Collegiate Athletic Association. All of the records established in 1890 have been broken, but even so the time made by Findley in the dashes and the distance of the broad jump compare favorably with the performances in

those events to-day. No football kick or baseball throw, no hitch and kick or hop, step, and jump appear on the program nowadays, and it is no longer customary to serve the visiting athletes with strawberries and ice cream. Other events, unknown to the pioneer field and track stars, have appeared. The javelin throw, the discus throw, the mile and the two mile runs, and the relay races have replaced the three-legged race and the tug of war.

Many of the men who participated in the first annual field day of the I. C. A. A. have won distinction in their chosen professions. They include among their number lawyers, judges, doctors, and educators of national reputation. Jerry Slattery, the hero of the first meet in Iowa City and spectacular performer at Grinnell, became a surgeon in Chicago. At the beginning of the Boer War, he enlisted in a regiment of Irish volunteers and was killed in action in South Africa, fighting his traditional enemy, the British, with the same dash that had made him a favorite on the cinder path.

To the athletes from the colleges of Iowa who struggled for mastery on field and track at Grinnell in 1890 belongs the credit for inaugurating one of the most important institutions in the athletic history of Iowa. The annual State meet of to-day and tomorrow is their monument.

Bruce E. Mahan

The Capital on Wheels

American seats of government, unlike the capitals of older countries, have always been migratory. Unusual circumstances such as the rapid expansion of the public domain, the constantly shifting population, and the democratic demand for centrally located political centers have been accountable for the instability of capital sites. There are few States, especially in the West, whose capitals remain where they were first established, while "county-seat contests" form a prominent and ever-present chapter of local history. Nor has the national capital been an exception to the rule. Within fifteen years during the formative period of the nation the seat of the national government was changed twelve times before it was finally established at Washington.

Since 1800 there have been three distinct movements to relocate the national capital. The first attempt was induced by the burning of the Capitol by the British in 1814. The second effort, which occurred in 1846, was the result of political and sectional interests and differences. The third and most formidable movement came after the Civil War. This movement originated in the Mississippi Valley and almost assumed the proportions of a national issue.

The agitation for the relocation of the national capital in 1846 was reflected in the First General Assembly of Iowa which convened at Iowa City in the fall of that year. Early in the session the question of selecting a new site for the State capital came before the Assembly and elicited much debate. Representative S. B. Olmstead became so obsessed with the spirit of capital removal that he introduced a joint resolution to move the national seat of government to the Raccoon Forks of the Des Moines River. The motion was tabled indefinitely.

Numerous citizens of Iowa City and Johnson County, who were provoked by the efforts to relocate the State capital, presented a petition begging "among other novelties, that the General Assembly permit the citizens of said county to enjoy reasonable health and abundant crops, together with other blessings denied them by nature and their own energies." In reporting upon this petition the committee on agriculture ventured the opinion with an air of badinage that when "your Committee takes into consideration the growing importance of the country about the Raccoon Forks of the Desmoines river, and compare the same with the District of Columbia, they cannot refrain from expressing their belief that although our Representatives may not be able to remove said Seat of Government 'immediately,' the day is nevertheless, not far distant, when this great object will have been accomplished, thus bringing the Seat of the Federal Government in

juxtaposition with your petitioners; thereby affording them a more favorable opportunity to press their claims upon that august Body, the Congress of the United States."

Visionary as this proposal now appears it was not without some foundation. A generation later the question of removing the national capital to the Mississippi Valley commanded the serious attention of leading statesmen. A mere catalogue of activities in behalf of the "scheme to put the capital on wheels" presents a formidable aspect. Two national conventions were held, a State constitutional convention took action, county boards, city councils, and State legislatures made bids and offered grants of land for the capital, newspaper editors wrote columns of editorials on the subject, pamphlets were published, a lobby was maintained at Washington, and several resolutions were offered in Congress.

There were several causes for the agitation. The remarkable increase of the population of mid-western States, particularly Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa, had shifted the center of population of the nation to western Ohio. The experience of the Civil War had reminded the people of the unstrategic location of Washington as the seat of government. There was also a prevalent opinion that the inhabitants of the District of Columbia were not only averse to honest government but were obstructing the work of political reconstruction. Moreover, there seemed to be a growing realization of the unity of the Mississippi

Valley: the old slavery line was forgotten in the vision of the great valley as the dominant section of the nation — the "heart of the continent".

The demand for the removal of the national capital to the West reduced to a definite issue found expression in the efforts to obtain appropriations for extensive improvements in Washington. The government had outgrown its habitation. The question in its simplest form was whether new and expensive buildings should be erected in Washington or at some other more centrally located site.

The contest began in the second session of the Fortieth Congress when Representative H. E. Paine of Milwaukee offered a resolution that "the seat of government ought to be removed to the Valley of the Mississippi." After some facetious debate the previous question was ordered and to the astonishment of the eastern jokers the proposition received the support of seventy-seven members of the House, while only ninety-seven could be mustered against it. "Considering that this was the first time a proposition for the relocation of the Capital has ever been seriously entertained or acted upon, the result ought to be accepted as an encouraging one", thought the *Iowa State Register*. William B. Allison, Grenville M. Dodge, Asahel W. Hubbard, William Loughridge, Hiram Price, and James F. Wilson — the entire Iowa delegation — voted for the resolution.

Later in 1868 John A. Logan of Illinois, the recog-

nized champion of capital removal in Congress, introduced a resolution calling for the appointment of a committee "to inquire into the propriety and expediency of removing the seat of the General Government from said city of Washington to a point near the geographical center of the Republic". This resolution was vigorously opposed as "a foul slander" on the people of the District of Columbia, and was defeated so decisively that the agitation for capital removal was temporarily stilled in the House of Representatives.

The newspaper discussion continued, however, led by Joseph Medill, the editor of the *Chicago Tribune.* Richard Edwards, President of the Illinois State Normal School, urged that the capital be moved to Rock Island, "that anomalous tract of 900 acres of government land lying in the Mississippi", situated in the pathway of the nation and "one of the most attractive spots in the United States". The *Iowa State Register* suggested that "the available ten miles square might be found in Iowa, somewhere near the junction of the main branches of the Des Moines River".

In September, 1869, a big commercial convention was held in Keokuk, Iowa, to boost for river improvement and the development of the resources of the Mississippi Valley. It was at this convention under the leadership of Samuel Miller, a Justice of the United States Supreme Court and a resident of Keokuk, that the first bid of the West was made for

the national capital before a large representative gathering.

Meanwhile, a National Capital Convention had been called to meet in St. Louis on October 20, 1869. The Governors of all of the States were invited to appoint two delegates for each Congressional district and four from the State at large. Twenty-one States and Territories responded. To represent Iowa Governor Samuel Merrill appointed ex-Governor Ralph P. Lowe, President G. F. Magoun of Iowa College (Grinnell), Maturin L. Fisher, and A. W. Hubbard from the State at large while the twelve district representatives were Augustus C. Dodge, James F. Wilson, Samuel J. Kirkwood, J. M. Tuttle, Grenville M. Dodge, H. E. Newell, G. M. Woodbury, A. H. Hamilton, W. E. Leffingwell, J. G. Patterson, Theodore Hawley, and Hiram Price. In the opinion of the *Chicago Tribune* this was "one of the strongest and ablest delegations ever sent to any convention, by any state for any purpose".

Governor Merrill believed that every consideration of the fitness of things, convenience, and military safety pointed to the removal of the capital at no distant day. He prophesied that within twenty years, "and probably forever thereafter, the heart of the nation will be not far east of the southeastern corner of Iowa." The location of the capital in the great valley — the center of population, political power, industrial achievement, and eventually of wealth — would, he thought, strengthen the Union

by harmonizing sectional interests and by dispelling the feeling that the more distant States and Territories were regarded more as dependencies of the government than as integral parts of the nation. "Locate the capital centrally," he declared, "and no matter how extensive the boundaries of the republic, each section would feel that it had an equal part in the government, equally participating in its benefits, and sharing equally in its responsibilities." Even though "our republic should be extended over the whole continent of North America" the Mississippi Valley would still be the proper place for a central capital. In view of the contemplated relocation of the seat of government the Governor believed it was "the clear duty of our representatives in Congress to decline to vote for further expenditures for the national buildings at the present capital."

The National Capital Convention met in the Mercantile Library Hall in St. Louis on the afternoon of October 20, 1869. Ralph P. Lowe, chairman of the Iowa delegation, was elected temporary chairman of the convention. The first day was consumed with organization and many speeches, some of which bordered on the ridiculous. But in the main the speeches were serious and the men were in earnest. The chief work of the convention — the adoption of resolutions — was accomplished on the second day.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE CONVENTION

WHEREAS, The present site of the national capital was selected as the most central point, when the people of this

republic, only a few millions in numbers, inhabited only a narrow strip of country along the Atlantic coast; and,

WHEREAS, The population of this republic has increased thirteen fold since then, and spread over a vast continent, of which the States in existence when the seat of government was located, form only the eastern edge; and,

WHEREAS, The present location of the national capital is notoriously inconvenient in times of peace, as the darkest pages of our national history demonstrate, in times of war or domestic turbulence is so dangerously exposed as to require vast armaments and untold millions of money for its special defense; and,

WHEREAS, All the reasons which caused the location of the seat of government where it now is, have, by the enormous development of the country, and a corresponding change in the wants of the people, become utterly obsolete; therefore,

1. *Resolved,* That it is absurd to suppose that the handful of inhabitants in 1789, just emerging from colonial vassalage, before steamboats, railways, telegraphs, or power-presses were dreamed of, or a mile of turnpike or canal constructed, possessed the authority or desired to exercise the power of fixing the site of the capital forever, on the banks of the Potomac, against the will and interests of the hundreds of millions who might come after them.

2. That the people have endured the present illy-located capital for three-quarters of a century, patiently waiting for the western territory of the Union to be peopled and organized into States, and until the center of population, area, and wealth could be determined, when a permanent place of residence for the government could be selected. That time has now come. All sectional issues are settled;

all dangerous domestic variances disposed of; a new era has been entered upon, and a new departure taken.

3. That in the language of James Madison, in the Congress of 1789, "an equal attention to the rights of the community, is the basis of republics. If we consider the effects of legislative power on the aggregate community, we must feel equal inducement to look to the center in order to find the proper seat of government." This equal attention has not been and cannot be given to the interests and rights of the people, so long as the capital is located in an inconvenient section of the Union.

4. That the vast and fertile region known as the Mississippi Valley, must for all time be the seat of empire of this continent, and exert the controlling influence in the nation, because it is homogeneous in its interests, and too powerful even to permit the outlying States to sever their connection with the Union. This vast plain will always be the surplus food and fiber-producing portion of the continent and the great market for the fine fabrics and tropical productions of the other sections of the republic. This immense basin must have numerous outlets and channels of cheap and swift communication by water and rail with the seaboard, for the egress of its products and ingress of its exchanges. Therefore, whatever policy the government may pursue that tends to multiply, improve, or enlarge those arteries of commerce, must result in common advantage to the whole Union — to the seaboard States equally with those of the center.

5. That the natural, convenient, and inevitable place for the capital of the republic is in the heart of this valley, where the center of population, wealth, and power is irresistibly gravitating; where the government, surrounded by

numerous millions of brave and Union-loving citizens, would be forever safe against foreign foes or sectional seditions, and where it would need neither armaments nor standing armies for its protection.

6. That while advocating the removal of the seat of government to the Mississippi Valley, we do not mean to serve the interests of any particular locality, but that we urge Congress to appoint a commission for the purpose of selecting a convenient site for the national capital in this great valley of the Mississippi, pledging ourselves to be satisfied with and to abide by the decision to be arrived at by the national legislature.

7. That in urging the removal of the national capital from its present inconvenient, out-of-the-way, and exposed location in the far East we are in earnest, and that we shall not cease in our efforts until that end is accomplished, firmly believing that the absolute necessity for the removal will become more apparent every day, and the majority of the American people will not long permit their interests and convenience to be disregarded.

8. That the removal of the national capital being only a question of time, we emphatically oppose and condemn all expenditures of money for enlargement of government buildings, and the erection of new ones at the present seat of the national Government, as a useless and wanton waste of the property of the people.

The St. Louis convention did not have much influence upon public opinion. Very little attention was paid to the project. General W. T. Sherman assured the people of Washington that they could calm their fears of losing the capital for he declared

that it would take a hundred years to get a removal motion through the House of Representatives, another hundred years to pass the Senate, a hundred and one years to agree upon a location, and then removal would be delayed fifty years in securing the necessary appropriations and erecting the buildings.

The Thirteenth General Assembly of Iowa convened on January 10, 1870, and a few days later Mr. Lowe made his report of the St. Louis convention to the Governor. He stated that "a goodly number" of the Iowa delegates had attended the convention, had "heartily participated in its proceedings," and had concurred in the resolutions that were adopted "without a dissenting voice". Nearly all of the States of the West and Southwest were represented in the convention, he asserted, "and their action in the premises was marked with wonderful unanimity and with that earnestness of conviction which would seem to take no denial in the final consummation of the measure." He added, significantly, that the delegates from Iowa, "so far as they lawfully could do so, have committed their State to the policy of removing the seat of the national government to the Mississippi valley — a measure of very great importance to the people of the West; and they would rejoice to know that their personal pledges upon the subject, should be supported by the more authoritative expression of the General Assembly of their State in the same direction."

National capital removal was made the subject of

a special message by Governor Merrill to the General Assembly on the last day of January, 1870, and he submitted the resolutions of the St. Louis convention together with Chairman Lowe's report for legislative consideration. Prior to this, however, on January 17th, James D. Wright had offered a resolution in the Senate proposing to instruct Iowa members of Congress to use their influence against any further appropriations for public buildings in Washington. This resolution was referred to the committee on federal relations which reported a substitute three days later that included the additional instruction for Iowa Congressmen "to use all honorable means to effect at the earliest practical period, a removal of the seat of Government from Washington City to some point in the great Valley of the Mississippi."

On January 27th the resolution came before the Senate for consideration. Senator Charles Beardsley of Burlington declared that the people in the Mississippi Valley had decided "that the National Capital *ought* to be removed; that it *will* be removed; and that it is only a question of time as to that removal." Senator John G. Patterson of Charles City emphasized the military advantage of having the national capital located in "this beautiful Valley of the West" because then "it would be beyond the power of a foreign foe, until they would pass through the densely populated States, to the very center of our Nation. They could never reach

our public archives by sea or railroad, and in this Valley they would be protected against the united powers of the foreign nations." Among other reasons for capital removal he mentioned the convenience of members of Congress, the cementing of national interests, the support of the Southern States, and the fact that "that strong iron band, the great Pacific railroad" centered in the Mississippi Valley.

Half in fun Senator William Larrabee proposed "to cede to the United States some portion of our territory to assist in accomplishing this removal of our National Capital". He thought "perhaps Lee county would like the privilege of paying off some of her bond indebtedness in this manner and have the Capital removed to that place, but I suppose that our democratic friends would object to having Lee county ceded to the United States for that purpose, though they would be willing no doubt to have the Capital located at Keokuk; and in that case I would suggest Des Moines county."

Thereupon Senator Beardsley expressed the hope that Senator Larrabee had not intended anything personal in his allusion to Lee County. "I hope he does not intend to convey the idea", said Mr. Beardsley, "that so many of the citizens of Lee county are now called upon to go to Washington City as Cabinet Ministers, Senators, Judges, members of Congress and Clerks in the various departments that it would be a saving of expense to bring

the capital to Keokuk. I must defend my neighbors down there from any such imputation as this."

Needless to say the substitute resolution passed the Senate almost unanimously. Meanwhile, a joint resolution with the following elaborate preamble had been introduced in the House by John W. Traer and referred to the committee on federal relations, of which John A. Kasson was chairman.

WHEREAS, The question of the removal and re-location, permanently, of the seat of government of the United States at some point more in consonance with the views and wishes of the people, is now agitating the public mind; and,

WHEREAS, The great Mississippi valley lies equi-distant from ocean and ocean, draining by her rivers one-half of the continent, and capable of floating on their bosom the commerce of the entire nation, crossed and re-crossed by the great arteries of commerce and travel, competing for the trade of the sea-board cities; and,

WHEREAS, Her unbounded natural resources, combining every element of future greatness, together with her rapid comparative increase of population, and the energy and intelligence of her people, all point unmistakably to her, in no distant future, as the seat of wealth, population, and manufactures of the Union.

On February 5th the Senate resolution, instead of the one offered by Mr. Traer, was reported to the House with a minor amendment which was readily accepted. To the passage of the resolution, however, John P. Irish was unalterably opposed. "I do

not want to make any contest about this resolution," he said, "instructing our Senators and Representatives in Congress, but I really do hope this resolution will not pass. I am aware that it has become very fashionable for western men to claim that we are entitled to the removal of the National Capital into the West. I fear many are using it as a sort of buncombe. For my part I am satisfied with it just where it is; where the men who gave it to us have located it. I do not think we are gaining any thing by it; but we are teaching our people to seek after the shadow rather than the substance. If we could conceive some measure by which our members in Congress could be emancipated from the influence of Eastern ideas about matters of trade and commerce, it might be of some importance and use; but I do not believe in this ornamental work of instructing them about the Capital. For that reason I call for the ayes and noes, for the purpose of recording my vote against it, if I be the only one in the House who does so."

To this William Mills of Dubuque responded that a glance at a map of the United States would indicate to every reflective mind that, "on the same principles of prudence and wisdom that characterize us in other matters," the location of the national capital must soon be changed. "When we look at counties and States who seek a central position for their county seats and Capitals," he said, "why should we apply a different rule in the location of

our National Capital? Why should the people of the West, especially those on the Pacific Slope, be obliged to travel away to the District of Columbia, merely because our forefathers had selected that point? I can see no reason why that should be so, only this: that we should continue our location of idols where our fathers built them, whether it be far from us or not, and whether modern improvements require a change or not. If this capital is ever to be changed, the true policy is not to increase the expenditures of money in the District of Columbia. It is evident from the public sentiment throughout the country, that the people will demand a change before long. Now, while I would not be in favor of a law restricting them from necessary improvements, I would be in favor of preventing any permanent expenditure of the public money. I hope the resolution will be adopted."

M. E. Cutts of Oskaloosa heartily concurred with Mr. Irish in wishing that "our representatives may be removed from the influence of the politicians of the East; and that our legislation may cease to be controlled by eastern policy and eastern men", but he thought that "one good way of doing that is to remove the place of legislation from the East to the West and surround the Capital with western men and western ideas."

Mr. Irish suggested that a better method would be to "remove these unworthy Representatives of the West." If Iowa would "send men to Congress

who have the interests of their constituents at heart, no danger can result from any blandishments that may surround them. I agree with the gentleman from Mahaska partially. Let us seek men who are true to the interests of the people they represent, and then you need not put your Capital on wheels, and bring it out West, when you want Western interests served; take it South, when you want Southern interests served; and back East, when you want Eastern interests served; and in the coming time we will not be harassed by having a peripatetic Capital."

"The trouble with the gentleman", replied Mr. Cutts, "is, that he was not elected to Congress in the Fourth District. I sympathize with him heartily. Though I differ with him as to the effect that that defeat had upon the country, yet I say to him, that I would sympathize with him any time."

"There is something more melancholy, at least to the people, than my defeat," retorted Mr. Irish, "and that was the success of the gentleman who beat me."

Here the debate ended. The resolution was adopted by a vote of eighty-five to three. The Senate concurred in the House amendment and the joint resolution was duly approved by the Governor.

In the meantime the intrepid John A. Logan had organized a bloc of seventy-four members of the national House of Representatives who were

pledged to vote for capital removal. On January 22, 1870, the House went into Committee of the Whole, with George W. McCrary of Iowa in the chair, to consider the question. It was on this occasion that Mr. Logan made his strongest plea for putting the national capital "on wheels" in a speech filling twenty columns in the *Congressional Globe.* Nothing came of it.

During a debate in the Senate upon the appropriation of a quarter of a million dollars for the extension of the capitol grounds in Washington, James Harlan called for the reading of the resolutions adopted by the Iowa legislature on that subject and then launched into an argument for capital removal. He was eloquently supported by Richard Yates, but when the vote on the appropriation was counted only ten Senators cast their ballot against it. James Harlan and James B. Howell of Iowa were among the dissenters. A vote in the House on a similar provision recorded five of the six Iowa Representatives among the nays.

The Iowa Republican State Convention which met in Des Moines in August, 1870, adopted a resolution in favor of removing the national capital to the Mississippi Valley and instructing Iowa Congressmen "not to vote one dollar for the erection of any new buildings, nor the purchase of any additional grounds at Washington City." There was not a dissenting vote against the resolution.

In October, 1870, a second national capital re-

moval convention was held in Cincinnati. Again Governor Merrill responded by appointing a strong delegation of twenty-four prominent men of the State, including Ralph P. Lowe, Benjamin F. Gue, Charles Beardsley, Samuel J. Kirkwood, George F. Magoun, Hoyt Sherman, and M. L. McPherson. Only four of them attended the convention, however, and the delegations from other States were similarly depleted. The enthusiasm for capital removal seemed to be ebbing. A resolution that further agitation on the question was "mischievous, uncalled for, and detrimental to the best interests of the nation" lacked only two votes of being adopted.

In Congress a final stand was made by the advocates of capital removal during the winter of 1871. All of the Iowa Representatives remained steadfast in opposition to appropriations for capital improvement in Washington, but neither Mr. Harlan nor Mr. Howell offered any objections in the Senate. The policy of erecting new buildings in Washington was definitely adopted and with that action the agitation for capital removal subsided. While hope lingered for some time in the western mind, and even to-day the suggestion of removing the seat of the national government to the Mississippi Valley meets a favorable response, the "scheme to put the capital on wheels" has not been seriously advocated since the early seventies.

J. A. Swisher

Comment by the Editor

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPORT

Recreation is as old as the race. Since the first sustained effort, relaxation has been essential in the life of man. Work requires thought, concentration, and reason — the highest mental processes — while modern social relations demand more self-restraint and repression of natural impulses than ever before in the evolution of civilization. The most effective relief from the strain of these strenuous times is found in various kinds of sport.

It was ever so. Juvenal's satirical phrase "bread and games" is not paradoxical. Games in a broad sense have always held a prominent place in human activities. Play is as natural as work.

Organized sport seems to be concomitant with periods of great mental achievement. The Olympic games reached their climax in the golden age of Greece; the Colosseum and the Circus Maximus were imposing monuments to the athletes of Rome in the height of her glory; while the development of sport in America has been contemporaneous with the most complex years in the history of this nation. Nervous stress may be measured, apparently, in terms of recreation.

The rise of sport in the United States is a phe-

nomenon of the last half century. Frederic L. Paxson thinks that the passing of the frontier was responsible for it. "The free lands were used up. The cow country rose and fell. The social safety valve was screwed down." There was no explosion because a new safety valve in the form of sport was discovered. Games were substituted for the conquest of a continent to fulfill the demands of innate physical vigor.

Whatever the causes of the renaissance of sport in America, the fact is evident. Wholesale interest and participation in organized sport began between the years 1876 and 1893. That was the period of sore muscles in American history. The widespread enthusiasm for games from the time of the centennial in Philadelphia to the world's fair in Chicago has steadily expanded, with the result that the organization and control of nearly every form of sport has become quasi-national. The sporting page in the daily press — a form of recognition accorded to few other activities — is a gauge of public interest and perhaps a test of the importance of games.

Some of the recent changes in national character and opinion may be attributed, in part at least, to the prevalence and the spirit of sport. Sheer force of public disapproval has driven frauds and quacks from the advertising pages of reputable journals; moral indifference to shady political and commercial methods has given way to real concern for public honesty; and general contempt has forced

recalcitrant crooks to comply with the rules. The emphasis upon clean sport has led to cleaner living. And who shall say that the women who took up tennis and bicycling did not at the same time make a great stride toward real emancipation?

J. E. B.

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Established by the Pioneers in 1857
Located at Iowa City Iowa

PUBLICATIONS OF THE SOCIETY

The Quarterly Journal of History
The Palimpsest—A monthly magazine
The Public Archives Series
The Iowa Biographical Series
The Iowa Economic History Series
The Iowa Social History Series
The Iowa Applied History Series
The Iowa Chronicles of the World War
The Miscellaneous Publications
The Bulletins of Information

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the State Historical Society may be secured through election by the Board of Curators. The annual dues are $3.00. Members may be enrolled as Life Members upon the payment of $50.00.

Address all Communications to

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Iowa City, Iowa